The crisis of public space

A few issues concerning public art today in Britain:

• The experience economy
• Privatisation
• regeneration – gentrification
I wish to explore the spectacular rise in the commissioning of public art the United Kingdom has experienced in the last few decades, a rise inaugurated principally under the impulse of New Labour who calibrated much of its support to the cultural industries according to their potential regenerative impact on depressed areas around the country.
The astonishing power of public art has long been recognised by both governments and 'big business' alike in the West: increasingly enormous public sculptures being deployed to 'regenerate' ailing post-industrial areas, or create the 'wow factor' on corporate HQ piazzas and at ever-expanding airports. But what if this strategy were employed in an attempt to turn around the fortunes of a whole country? This book proposes a scenario in which two giants of British public art are commissioned by the United Nations in a last ditch attempt to solve the social, financial and political problems of Afghanistan.
All the while, the definition of a British public space, which might serve as a marker of the genre, has itself undergone major transformations likely to alter the actual definition of what public art is today, and to mark it out from its more static, more monumental post-war embodiment as epitomized by the outdoor sculptures of Henry Moore.
Henry Moore, *Draped Seated Woman* 1957-8 at the Stifford Estate, Stepney
The new territories of site-specific creation in Britain are physically the same as they were in the 20th century, but the ideological, urbanistic and commercial redefinition of its cities and countryside has transformed the articulation between site and work and has called for new grids of analysis – such as participation, as defined by Claire Bishop, or situation art, the framework suggested by Claire Doherty. Indeed, the advance of mobile telephony, of social networks and of the commercialisation of the high street has blurred the lines between public and private spheres
I will observe that contemporary artists have often explored new modes of occupying the British environment which resonate with its rapid transformation and privatisation, as well as with its ambiguous attitude to globalisation, by choosing more fluid, communal, and interim expressions.
Activists hold May Day ‘pop-up’ block party in Seattle to protest youth incarceration

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DJ Proli plays music Monday for a “pop-up” May Day block party at the King County Juvenile Justice Center, protesting youth incarceration and the proposal to build a new youth jail in Seattle’s Central District. (Erika Schultz / The Seattle Times)
Meanwhile Foundation project, SK Studios portacabin site in South Kilburn
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I participate
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We participate
You participate
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Drawn Plans: Build sequence

1. Full building with all original components
2. Top level finishing, including module as part of new configuration
3. Further top levels of building dismantled, prior to being reassembled and support of district services
4. Most levels of building removed
5. Ground floor level of building dismantled, prior to being reassembled and support of district services
6. Reassembled components placed in their new locations, prior to being reassembled and extended half way
Ben Rivers

THE TWO EYES

Artangel

EBX

Block

ARE NOT

BROTHERS